

Growing Closer to God

Purpose: The purpose of this message is to motivate you to pursue God as first priority in your life.

Objectives: 1) To encourage you to make seeking God the highest priority in your life.
2) To be able to define a specific time and place for meeting with God as well as what you will do.

Key Verse: John 17:3

I. Introduction

Think through the relationships you have with people, from everyday ones to special ones. Now, think of relationships you used to have with others.

What is the difference between the two? What keeps relationships going?

Note to instructor: Let the students talk about this for a few minutes. Don't allow this to go for long, it is only the introduction.

As Christians, we know that it's important to make God our first priority and spend regular, quality time with Him. But few of us actually do this. Why don't we spend time with God as we should?

Note to instructor: Let students respond.

We've just looked at our hearts, what we allow to get in the way of spending time with God. Though there is some need to look at "how to's" in developing a relationship with God, spending time with God is only partly a "how to" thing. Most of it is a motivation thing. We spend time with people we want to, and we learn how to do it because we are motivated to. Too often we focus first on the how to's and forget that motivated people simply "do". God desires an intimate relationship with you, with each of us. How can we stay motivated to pursue Him?

II. Growing Closer to God

It takes time to develop intimacy (closeness) in any human relationship. In the same way it takes time to develop an intimate relationship with God. David was called a "man after God's own heart," meaning he had a close, heart-to-heart relationship with God. Psalm 103 gives a vivid overview of why David sought intimacy with God and reminds us why we should.

- A. David provides good reasons for meeting with God. (Psalm 103). In this psalm what drove David to spend time with God? Write your answers beside the verses listed below.

The instructor could have the class divide up into four small groups of 3 or 4 each, depending upon the size of the class. Allow 5 minutes for discussion and another five minutes to share answers and you to summarize.

- 1-5 (specific kindnesses toward me, personally)
6-10 (Lord takes care of His own and develops them)
11-14 (He is compassionate, like a father)
15-19 (I am nothing apart from Him, and He is over all)

Based on Psalm 103 and from what you have written, what are some reasons we should spend regular time with God?

Instructor can ask the students what they wrote. If not mentioned, the instructor could share the following.

1. *He first loved us, has been good to us and it is normal to respond in love back.*
 2. *He doesn't give us what we deserve.*
 3. *He protects us.*
 4. *He's compassionate.*
 5. *He does His work through us.*
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Lack of spending time with God is very often an indicator that we've lost perspective. Regaining perspective is often all it takes to fuel the fire of our desire to know Him. There is, however, another reason why we may not be growing closer to God.

- B. Obedience Read the following verses and see what theme they have in common.

Note to instructor: If not mentioned, you could share:

- Psalm 25:14 *God makes known His plans to those who fear Him.*
John 14:15; 14:21 *Loving Jesus means obeying Him and being loved by Him.*
Hebrews 11:6 *Faith is what pleases God.*

Faith, shown through obedience is essential to developing our relationship with God. If we aren't doing, by faith, what we know He wants us to do, it is impossible to grow with Him. This is like a child disobeying a parent and then feeling distant because of fear of getting caught.

When we remember what He has done for us and obey Him, this creates the desire to know Him more and results in a growing relationship with Him. So, what can we do to keep/recover perspective and do what we are supposed to do?

Instructor could ask, "What did you come up with?"

III. Principles for personal Application.

A. Necessary attitudes

1. There is no formula for spending time with God. As in any relationship you will not always spend time with God in the same way. Communication is a two-way street; that means you will need to spend time talking to God and time listening to God. This usually translates into time of prayer and time in the Word. But it also means seeing Him as a part of everything you do. In God's world there is no difference between sacred and secular. All is sacred.
2. Activities may (and ought to) vary, but the goal is to spend time communicating with God.
3. Relationships take time. You need to plan regular times with God.

B. Various quiet time activities.

It would be good for the instructor to share various things he/she has done as quiet time activities. Bring any Quiet Time journals, personal Bible with special verses underlined, etc. Share about prayer walks, retreats and other things. The student needs to see your heart. You could ask the students what they have done as well.

1. Read the Bible. As you read, think about what you are reading, and what it means to your relationship with God.
2. Study the Bible. Work on understanding what God says paragraph by paragraph and book by book. Are there: Sins to confess? Promises to claim? Actions to avoid? Commands to obey? Examples to follow? Truths to meditate on and live by?
3. Praise and worship God. Spend time – either alone or with others – telling God what you like about Him, what you are discovering about Him, etc. This may lead you to the next idea: Singing.
4. Sing or play music. Music is a wonderful means of communication. Not only does it stir our emotions, but also it is honoring and pleasing to God. In fact the psalms are songs.
5. Prayer. Pray with others or alone. Pray in a 'closet' (private place) or while walking. Tell God your needs, fears, feelings, joys, everything on your heart.

6. Pray through passages of Scripture. As you read and study the Word, talk with God about what the passage says. Thank Him for His attributes revealed in the passage. Pray about commands and ask Him to make them real in your life. Claim the promises.

IV. Action Points

- A. How much time will you spend with God this week?

The answer is you spend all of your time in His presence, the real question is how much of that time will include Him in it?

- B. When will you meet with Him?
- C. Where will you meet Him?
- D. How will you spend your time together?